

Morse code is still the most basic form of amateur radio communication that can be counted on to get the message through even in difficult situations with marginal antennas. This is one of the main reasons for existence of amateur radio, to be able to support Homeland Security and other public service incidents.

Five words per minute should not be a major obstacle for motivated people. That speed does provide the capability to communicate rather than just requiring morse code recognition. Perhaps there could be special conditional exceptions for operators with dyslexia or other documented medical conditions.

Another suggestion is to have the General Class license granted limited HF privileges such as reduced power and certain frequency bands until they pass the 5 wpm and the Extra Class technical exam.

Most VHF/UHF FM operation is extremely simple and does not require much technical expertise. Interference or other problems caused by improper operation of a transmitter are only localized problems. Operating improperly on HF is a much more serious problem that required greater operator competence. Operating morse code does not improve this competence and neither does a more detailed technical examination. I recommend that a part of the VEC process be to assign a mentor to each potential HF operator so that some specific guidance and training can occur prior to independent operation. Signature from this mentor could provide permission for full HF operation even if there was no morse code requirement and the HF spectrum would be properly utilized.

I recommend that 5wpm morse code be retained for Extra Class but be eliminated for General Class as long as there is some mentor process to help ensure proper operation. I recommend that the Extra Class morse and voice band segments be retained.